
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 1772 (Papan) - Fish and wildlife: invasive species: invasive mussels

Version: June 25, 2026

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: August 3, 2026

Policy Vote: N.R. & W. 6 - 0, JUD. 13 - 0

Mandate: Yes

Consultant: Ashley Ames

Bill Summary: This bill would establish standards and licensing for a statewide network of recreational vessel inspection and decontamination stations staffed by trained inspectors to prevent the spread of invasive mussels, as provided. The bill would establish the use of a recreational vessel tracking system, and a new biannual nonmotorized recreational vessel invasive mussel infestation prevention fee to help fund invasive mussel prevention efforts, as provided.

Fiscal Impact:

- The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) estimates ongoing costs of \$86.2 million in fiscal year 2027-28 and \$74.9 million annually thereafter (General Fund) for 559 full-time positions to decontaminate or order the decontamination of conveyances with invasive species, in accordance with requirements specified in the bill, and to establish standards and procedures for decontaminating conveyances and disposing of organisms and organic materials so that no viable invasive mussels remain on or in the conveyance before launch.
- The Department of Parks and Recreation (State Parks) estimates ongoing costs of \$30 million annually (General Fund) to support inspection and decontamination stations, associated staff, equipment, and materials for reservoirs operated/managed by the department, which includes \$5 million to support implementation of the statewide database (WID) as required in the bill. State Parks notes that its actual costs would be contingent upon program standards and procedures to be determined by CDFW, as required by the bill.

Background: Since 2007, California has been working to control and eradicate two species of invasive, freshwater mussels in state waters—the quagga and zebra (dreissenid) mussels—due to their ability to impede the operations of water supply infrastructure. Existing law makes the zebra mussel a restricted species, which prohibits a person from possessing, importing, shipping, transporting, or introducing such a mussel into any water within the state, unless authorized by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) through a restricted species permit. Water managers are required to work with CDFW to develop protocols to prevent infestation and control plans to prevent the spread of the invasive mussels should the water system become infested. Last year, the Legislature expanded existing law to include any invasive mussel, including the golden mussel. (AB 149 (Committee on Budget, Ch. 106, Stats. 2025.))

Golden mussels have proven to be much more difficult for the state and water managers to control than quagga and zebra mussels. Golden mussels have high reproductive rates and form dense colonies. This mass colonization of surfaces (i.e.

“biofouling”) blocks, impairs, and, in many cases, inhibits the functionality of manmade surfaces including underwater intakes, structures, and mechanisms. A photo of an encrusted sampling plate is included on the next page to illustrate the impacts to water infrastructure in particular. Biofouling also coats the hulls and external components of watercraft and recreational facilities, and natural objects such as rocks, fallen trees, even other sedentary bivalves. Nearly every fresh and brackish waterbody in California is suitable habitat for golden mussels.

The presence of the golden mussel poses a significant and immediate threat to the ecological health of the Delta and all waters of the state, water conveyance systems, infrastructure, and water quality. Environmental impacts of the golden mussel include disruption of ecosystems, contributions to the conditions that cause harmful algal blooms, and loss of native and game fish through competition for food sources. It is estimated that a single mussel can filter up to a liter of water a day, which would remove critical nutrients and microbes that support ecosystem health. Impacts of the mussel to recreation include waterbody closures, mandatory boat inspections, increased launch and/or entry fees, and reduced numbers of fish and shellfish for consumption.

Economic impacts include costly repairs and maintenance (e.g., boats, water infrastructure, hydroelectric facilities); reduced water flow affecting food production and water delivery to homes; and impacts to flood control infrastructure. “Tens of millions of dollars are being spent to stop the mussels.” The Arvin-Edison water district, for example, recently spent \$2.8 million to perform a chemical treatment that killed all of the golden mussels present. Estimates of ongoing costs to the district range as high as \$10 million depending upon the frequency and method of treatment required which remains unknown. Additional treatment methods being evaluated by water suppliers include ultraviolet lights and mechanical scraping.

For recreational motor boaters, “Clean, Drain, Dry” is the general method to eradicate mussels on or in the boats. Approximately 30 lakes across the state instituted recreational boat inspections for mussels and their free-swimming larvae (known as veligers) after discovery of the golden mussel, and several required at least a 30-day quarantine prior to boat launch. The state mussel infestation fee assessed from recreational motor boaters in freshwater increased to \$16 annually. Lake County requires the purchase of an additional Lake County mussel infestation sticker for \$20 for recreational motor boaters. In the Lake Tahoe area, boat inspection sites have been upgraded, and there is an extensive public education and outreach effort underway, including outreach to users of nonmotorized vessels, such as paddleboards and kayaks, that can also be a vector for the transport of mussels between waterbodies.

Proposed Law: This bill would strengthen California's invasive mussel prevention framework by barring a conveyance from launching until a specified drying period is complete, broadening the definition of “invasive mussel” and requiring water supply system operators to update their control plans to cover every species present or newly detected, establishing a departmentally licensed inspection and decontamination station program with qualified inspectors, application fees, two-year licenses, and mandatory use of a shared conveyance-tracking data system, and imposing a \$20 biennial invasive mussel infestation prevention fee and sticker on nonmotorized vessels, with fee and citation revenue deposited into two new accounts in the Harbors and Watercraft Revolving Fund for regulatory costs, grants, and educational materials.

This bill would:

1. Require that the inspection and decontamination of conveyances for aquatic invasive species be performed in the state in accordance with uniform standards and procedures established by CDFW for decontaminating conveyances effective at removing or destroying invasive mussels, as provided.
 1. Provide that CDFW would have sole authority for developing and implementing the program.
 2. Provide that CDFW and any other state agency exercising authority under the program would not be liable with regard to any determination or authorization made pursuant to the program consistent with the immunity granted under the Government Claims Act, provided CDFW adhered to all standards, procedures, and regulations promulgated by CDFW.
2. Authorize a licensed inspection and decontamination station to issue an inspection, decontamination, or quarantine certificate to an owner of or person in possession of an inspected conveyance. Would require the certificate to contain certain information, such as any decontamination performed and the time and place of the inspection, as provided.
3. Require CDFW, on or before January 1, 2028, to collect an invasive mussel infestation prevention fee of \$20 every two years from each nonmotorized vessel owner for each nonmotorized vessel launched into waters of the state. Would require indexing of the fee every odd-numbered year using the California Consumer Price Index to the nearest whole dollar. Would require that the fee not exceed the reasonable regulatory costs of CDFW for implementation.
4. Require CDFW to use the Regional Watercraft Inspection and Decontamination (WID) Data Sharing System managed by the Colorado Department of Natural Resources for tracking the movement of conveyances, equipment, and other vectors among California waterbodies.
 1. Require an inspection and decontamination station to enter each inspected, decontaminated, or quarantined conveyance into the WID Data Sharing System.
 2. Require the manager of a state waterbody with a staffed launch point to register each launching conveyance into the WID Data Sharing System.
 3. Require CDFW to provide guidance to entities that own or manage reservoirs or other launch points on how to track decontaminated and inspected conveyances in the WID Data Sharing System, and would require CDFW to encourage use of the WID Data Sharing System across the state.
 4. Provide that data gathered by the WID Data Sharing System or its equivalents would be used solely for preventing invasive mussel species infestations of the state's waterbodies and would not be sold, bartered, or

provided to other public or private parties, or used in any other way for any other purpose.

Related Legislation:

AB 2032 (Ransom, 2026) would exempt a public or private agency that operates a water supply system from certain CDFW permitting requirements until an invasive mussel control plan is submitted, approved, or denied, as applicable; require at least quarterly updating of an online map of golden mussel observations by CDFW; and require the California Department of Food and Agriculture and the State Water Resources Control Board to quickly and efficiently respond to the threat of golden mussels, among other provisions, as provided.

AB 2787 (Assembly Water, Parks, and Wildlife Committee, 2026) among other things, provides that a person who operates a Nevada-registered vessel on the waters of Lake Tahoe or Topaz Lake shall not be cited for operation of a vessel without a valid state-issued invasive mussel sticker, provided that Nevada has a program in effect for the management of aquatic invasive species.

AB 1894 (B. Rubio, 2026) would prevent a public agency from prohibiting imported water deliveries for groundwater replenishment due to invasive mussels unless there is substantial, documented evidence of a proven health and safety risk as a result of the invasive mussels.

AB 149 (Assembly Budget Committee, Chapter 106, Statutes of 2025), among other things, expanded statute and programs from “dreissenid mussels” to “invasive mussels,” establishes a requirement for CDFW to review and approve updated invasive mussel control plans, and increased the invasive mussel fee.

AB 1150 (Assembly Water, Parks, and Wildlife Committee, Chapter 831, Statutes of 2023), among other things, distinguished that the issuance and collection of the quagga and zebra mussel infestation and prevention fee from the biennial registration renewal.

AB 2443 (Williams, Chapter 485, Statutes of 2012), establishes the quagga and zebra mussel infestation prevention program, which required payment of the invasive mussel fee on vessels and permitted the use of the funds for, among other things, a grant program.

AB 1929 (Hall, Chapter 152, Statutes of 2010) determines that a water operator is indemnified from the penalty of possessing and transporting a restricted species, if the water operator is in compliance with an approved control plan.

AB 2065 (Hancock, Chapter 667, Statutes of 2008) requires reservoir managers to undertake certain measures to prevent invasive mussel infestation in reservoirs in which invasives mussels have not been detected.

AB 1683 (Wolk, Chapter 419, Statutes of 2007) prohibits a person to possess, import, ship, or transport in the state, or place, plant, or cause to be placed or planted in any water within the state, dreissenid mussels, unless authorized by CDFW. Additionally, authorizes the Director of CDFW, or the Director’s designee, to conduct inspections of conveyances (e.g., vehicles and boats), order that the conveyance be drained, dried, or

decontaminated, impound or quarantine conveyances, and conduct inspections of waters of the state and facilities that may contain invasive mussels. Further, requires water operators to implement measures to avoid dreissenid mussel infestation and develop a control plan upon infestation, among other things.

Staff Comments: CDFW has longstanding budget concerns which have persisted despite repeated efforts over multiple decades to address them. When the state has significant fiscal concerns – as it does now – ensuring consistent and sustained funding for CDFW is particularly challenging. Recently, at legislative direction, CDFW undertook a “service-based” budgeting effort to identify the personnel needed to perform the services required by its mandates. CDFW’s services were separated into eight general programs for analysis. In 2021, the initial results of this effort were released and revealed that CDFW’s funding was inadequate to meet its “mission” service level. Most of the programs were funded at about one-third of the level necessary. The Newsom Administration proposed, and the Legislature approved, significant one-time General Fund moneys to support CDFW’s activities in the near-term. Some progress in addressing the gaps in service were subsequently made, although this was offset, at least in part, by new duties.

Unfortunately, a recent update (for fiscal year 2024/2025) shows that most programs have not received a substantial change in funding. While addressing the presence and spread of golden mussels in the state is clearly a CDFW priority, this effort will require substantial additional funding.

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